What is Claimed is:

1. A method of monitoring sterilization of a medical probe, comprising:

detecting an environmental condition to which the medical probe is exposed;

electronically storing a probe sterilization indicator in the medical probe if the detected environmental condition indicates exposure of the medical probe to a sterilization cycle; and

determining whether the probe sterilization indicator is present.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the environmental condition is temperature-based.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein the environmental condition is moisture-based.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein the environmental condition is pressure-based.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein the environmental condition is chemical-based.

6. The method of claim 1, further comprising preventing usage of the medical probe based on a presence of the probe sterilization indicator.

7. The method of claim 1, further comprising preventing usage of the medical probe based on a presence of the probe sterilization indicator and a presence of a probe usage indicator indicating previous operation of the medical probe.

8. The method of claim 1, wherein a presence of the probe sterilization indicator is determined when the medical probe is connected to a control unit.

9. A method of limiting usage of a medical probe, comprising:

detecting an environmental condition to which the medical probe is exposed;

electronically storing a probe sterilization indicator in the medical probe if the detected environmental condition indicates exposure of the medical probe to a sterilization cycle;

determining whether the probe sterilization indicator is present; and

conditionally operating the medical probe based on the presence of the probe sterilization indicator.

10. The method of claim 9, further comprising:

electronically storing a probe usage indicator in the medical probe when the medical probe is initially operated; and

determining the presence of the probe usage indicator.

11. The method of claim 10, wherein the medical probe is conditionally operated based on the presence of the probe sterilization indicator and the presence of the probe usage indicator.

12. The method of claim 10, wherein operation of the medical probe is prevented if the probe sterilization indicator and the probe usage indicator are present.

13. The method of claim 10, wherein operation of the medical probe is prevented if the probe sterilization indicator and the probe usage indicator are absent.

14. The method of claim 10, wherein operation of the medical probe is allowed if the probe sterilization indicator is present and the probe usage indicator is absent.

15. The method of claim 10, wherein operation of the medical probe is allowed if the probe sterilization indicator is absent and the probe usage indicator is present.

16. The method of claim 14, wherein the probe sterilization indicator is cleared from the medical probe and the probe usage indicator is stored in the medical probe if the probe sterilization indicator is present and the probe usage indicator is absent.

17. The method of claim 9, further comprising:

electronically storing an estimated probe sterilization date in the medical probe when the medical probe is manufactured;

electronically storing an actual probe sterilization date in the medical probe when the medical probe is sterilized; and

determining the estimated probe sterilization date of the medical probe and the actual probe sterilization date of the medical probe.

18. The method of claim 17, wherein operation of the medical probe is prevented if the actual probe sterilization date is later than the estimated probe sterilization date.

19. The method of claim 9, further comprising:

electronically storing an actual probe sterilization date in the medical probe when the medical probe is sterilized; and

determining the actual probe sterilization date of the medical probe.

20. The method of claim 19, wherein operation of the medical probe is prevented if the difference between actual probe sterilization date and a reference date exceeds a predetermined period of time.

21. The method of claim 20, wherein the predetermined period of time is a shelf-life of the medical probe.

22. A control unit for connection to a medical probe, the medical probe having electronic storage componentry, the control unit comprising:

control circuitry configured to electrically couple to the electronic storage componentry for reading data from the electronic storage componentry, and for conditionally operating the medical probe based on a presence of a probe sterilization indicator in the data.

23. The control unit of claim 22, wherein the conditional operation of the medical probe is also based on a presence of a probe usage indicator in the data.

24. The control unit of claim 23, wherein operation of the medical probe is prevented if the probe sterilization indicator and the probe usage indicator are present.

25. The control unit of claim 23, wherein operation of the medical probe is prevented if the probe sterilization indicator and the probe usage indicator are absent.

26. The control unit of claim 23, wherein operation of the medical probe is allowed if the probe sterilization indicator is present and the probe usage indicator is absent.

27. The control unit of claim 23, wherein operation of the medical probe is allowed if the probe sterilization indicator is absent and the probe usage indicator is present.

28. The control unit of claim 26, wherein the probe sterilization indicator is cleared from the electronic storage componentry and the probe usage indicator is stored in the electronic storage componentry when the medical probe is operated if the probe sterilization indicator is present and the probe usage indicator is absent.

29. The control unit of claim 26, wherein the probe sterilization indicator is cleared from the electronic storage componentry and the probe usage indicator is stored in the electronic storage componentry when the medical probe is effectively operated if the probe sterilization indicator is present and the probe usage indicator is absent.

30. The control unit of claim 22, wherein the control circuitry comprises a microprocessor.

31. The control unit of claim 22, further comprising:

an RF power source; and

an interlocking device electrically coupled between the RF power source and the control circuitry.

32. A medical probe, comprising:

an elongate member having a distally located operative element; and

electronic storage componentry configured for detecting an environmental condition to which the medical probe is exposed and electronically storing a probe

sterilization indicator in the medical probe if the detected environmental condition indicates exposure of the medical probe to a sterilization cycle.

33. The medical probe of claim 32, wherein the electronic storage componentry is non-volatile.

34. The medical probe of claim 32, wherein the electronic storage componentry comprises non-volatile RAM coupled to a battery.

35. The medical probe of claim 32, wherein the electronic storage componentry comprises an EEPROM coupled to a battery.

36. The medical probe of claim 32, wherein the environmental condition is temperature-based.

37. The medical probe of claim 32, wherein the environmental condition is moisture-based.

38. The medical probe of claim 32, wherein the environmental condition is pressure-based.

39. The medical probe of claim 32, wherein the environmental condition is chemical-based.

40. The medical probe of claim 32, wherein the electronic storage componentry is further configured for storing a probe usage indicator therein.

41. The medical probe of claim 32, wherein the elongate member forms a catheter.

42. The medical probe of claim 32, wherein the elongate member forms a surgical probe.